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INFO RUEHHI/AMEMBASSY HANOI  
RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY 0229

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SENSITIVE  
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FOR DRL/IRF AND EAP/MLS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/12/04  
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KIRF](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [VM](#)  
SUBJECT: Controversial Pastor Accused of Rape

CLASSIFIED BY: Harry Kamian, Political Counselor; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) On December 2, Protestant Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh was detained for police questioning in connection with at least one rape case in Gia Lai Province. According to Pastor Siu Y Kim (strictly protect), an Executive Board member of the Southern Evangelical Church of Vietnam South and the most well-known Protestant leader in the Central Highlands, the charges -- which post originally assumed were concocted to defame Pastor Chinh -- may have merit. On December 3, Pastor Kim (a reliable source) told us that he believes that Chinh had raped several young Christian female followers. One of the girls that was allegedly raped lives next door to Kim's sister, Kim said, adding that he has spoken with her several times and believes her story. She, along with at least one other female, has recently filed a police complaint against Chinh. Rumors have circulated for some time about some of Chinh's "extracurricular activities," but Chinh's followers dismissed these reports as scurrilous propaganda. Pastor Chinh called us December 3 to tell us that he had been released, only claiming that he was detained in order to be denounced by a large group of assembled local officials.

¶2. (C) Pastor Chinh is the leader of the Protestant Community Church Of Christ In Vietnam - Vietnamese People's Evangelical Fellowship (PCCC-VPEF). He previously served as a leader in the unrecognized Mennonite church, but was pressured to leave because of his high-profile political criticisms of the government and personality conflicts with other church leaders. Pastor Chinh later joined the PCCC-VPEF as President and has focused aggressively on proselytizing ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands and Mekong Delta. Other Protestant denominations in the area resent what they see as "poaching," as well as Chinh's aggressive political tactics, which other Protestant leaders consider needlessly inflammatory.

¶3. (C) Pastor Chinh was one of two recipients of an award from the Vietnam Human Rights Network, a group of advocates based in the United States. When the award was announced, Pastor Chinh claimed that the GVN was "seeking all means to eliminate" his church. While some of Chinh's earlier claims of beatings and harassment may have been exaggerated or even fabricated, he and his family have faced many hardships, and we have documented many instances where his followers have been harassed by GVN officials.

¶4. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Ho Chi Minh City.  
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